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COMOR-D-47/4

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1 September 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR: United States Intelligence Board

SUBJECT: Intelligence Requirements for  
Aerial Photo Reconnaissance  
Relevant to the Current and  
Ongoing International Situation.

1. In accordance with the decision of the U.S.I.B. on August 31, 1961, the Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance has reviewed the critical needs of United States intelligence which should be satisfied in order to provide the intelligence support for anticipated policy decisions which will face the United States Government during the current international crisis.

2. The COMOR believes that the timely acquisition of high resolution photography is essential to answer these critical intelligence needs and recommends that U-2 photography be obtained on certain highest priority targets as outlined in the attached paper. In making its recommendation, the COMOR recognizes that overflight at this time is a matter of grave risk and has accordingly looked most critically at the targets which it recommends and the justification which it submits.

3. The COMOR has also taken into account the needs of policy-makers for intelligence which will be directly related to the Berlin situation. It has prepared and submitted directly to CIA/Operations a list of targets for contingency planning. These targets relate to the following assumptions and the intelligence needs confronting us under the assumed conditions:

NRO review(s) completed.

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a. Assuming no near-term settlement of the Berlin crisis, our knowledge of the military situation in East Germany needs to be completed and brought up to date.

b. In the event that access to Berlin is closed to the Allies it is essential to determine the status of Soviet and satellite forces adjacent to Berlin, elsewhere in East Germany, and possibly in certain European satellite countries. Effective determination of the status of these forces would probably require periodic overflights.

c. Depending on the course of the Berlin crisis after access routes are closed, periodic coverage may be required of those targets capable of attacking Allied Forces in Europe as well as those capable of attacking the U.S.

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James Q. Reber  
Chairman  
Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance

**Attachment:**

**Justification for U-2 Photography  
Over the USSR**

**Distribution:**

**Copy 2-- State TCO  
3-- OSD TCO  
4-- JCS TCO  
5-- OACSI TCO  
6-- ONI TCO  
7, 8, 9 - AFCIN TCO  
10, 11 - NSA TCO**

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JUSTIFICATION FOR U-2 PHOTOGRAPHY  
OVER THE USSR

1. Policymakers of the United States Government will require the firmest possible knowledge of the Soviet military posture and state of alert during the current period of international tension. In this connection, the most critical intelligence problem concerns present Soviet ICBM capabilities.

2. Satellite photography has identified deployed ICBM complexes in the USSR. However, there are a number of critical missile and related military questions which cannot be answered with satellite photography of present quality. Photography obtained by the U-2, being of greater interpretability, will contribute to the solution of these problems. In addition, the U-2 can be operated in optimum weather conditions against specific highest priority targets as opposed to the non-selectivity of coverage of the current satellite systems.

3. Targets other than ICBM complexes are also important in determining the USSR's military posture and state of alert, but we believe U-2 coverage of them, while of very high priority, is of somewhat less urgency.

4. We are not recommending the employment of the U-2 for general search because satellite photography is more appropriate for this purpose.

5. ICBM: A most critical problem relating to the ICBM concerns its deployment and operational status -- specifically, for example, whether sites are operational or under construction, salvo capability, the extent of hardening, the type of guidance, the nature of support and missile handling facilities, the refire capability. We have acquired coverage of the Plesetsk area with satellite photography on four occasions; in each of these the area was partially obscured by clouds. Nonetheless, through the openings it was possible to discern that at Plesetsk there are extensive highly secure complexes, defended by SAM sites. From this photography we cannot confirm that this installation is an ICBM complex. However, from this photography and collateral information, we strongly suspect that this is a first generation ICBM complex, as distinct from our current conclusion bearing upon the second generation ICBM complexes discussed below. The attached photographs of Plesetsk demonstrate the effect of cloud cover and the difficulties involved in definitive interpretation of satellite photography.

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6. We have also located with satellite photography four deployed ICBM complexes -- Yurya, Yoskor-ola, Verkhnaya Salda, and Kostroma -- which we believe to be intended for the second generation ICBMs. However, we do not have sufficient information to determine their operational readiness or whether first generation ICBMs are being deployed on them. The quality and resolution of satellite photography which we have secured, or which we anticipate in the next six months will be secured, does not permit sufficiently accurate photo interpretation to answer these questions.

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7. These questions can be answered by photography with the U-2 resolution [REDACTED]. Additionally, the U-2 photo system provides stereo, an important advantage not available in the current satellite photo systems. An appreciation of the difference between U-2 and satellite photography as relevant to these questions may be gained from examination of the Exhibit of Tyuratam and Kapustin Yar attached. The technical data displayed on the accompanying drawings cannot be obtained from satellite photography. Such technical data are required on the ICBM complexes in order to determine the operational status and the nature of the threat. The U-2 is the only controlled vehicle with a chance of survival which has the photographic capability of providing this photography.

8. It is recommended that U-2 coverage be obtained on the following highest priority targets in the order listed: Plesetsk, Yurya, Yoskor-ola, Verkhnaya Salda, and Kostroma.

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INTRODUCTION TO EXHIBITS

Detailed technical analysis, similar to that obtained by the U-2 (and illustrated in the attached exhibit) is not possible with current satellite photography.

Satellite photography permits the readout of gross data such as the existence of deployed ICBM sites. However, even with maximum enlargement, or use of transparencies, the scale and resolution of satellite photography precludes detailed analysis required for technical data.

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12--OCI TCO  
13--OSI TCO  
14--ORR TCO  
15--DIR NPIC  
16--TSO CIA  
17--C/DMD/NPIC  
18--DDP TCO  
19--Intel Staff/DPD  
20--SO/DPD  
**21 - 34 --C/SRS/DPD/DDP**

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